

8-1990

Public Relations: Its Importance in the Public School System

Lawrence Crittenden Hunter

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>



Part of the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hunter, Lawrence Crittenden, "Public Relations: Its Importance in the Public School System" (1990). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 1690.
<http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/1690>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:
ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

A Specialist Project
Presented To
the Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partical fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

by
Lawrence Crittenden Hunter, II

August 1990

AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF THESIS

Permission is hereby

☒ granted to the Western Kentucky University Library to make, or allow to be made photocopies, microfilm or other copies of this thesis for appropriate research for scholarly purposes.

☐ reserved to the author for the making of any copies of this thesis except for brief sections for research or scholarly purposes.

Signed: Lauren C. Burt

Date: 8/10/90

Please place an "X" in the appropriate box.

This form will be filed with the original of the thesis and will control future use of the thesis.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

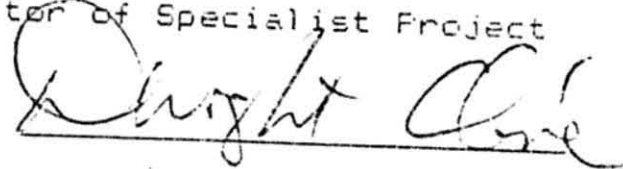
ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Recommended

(Date)

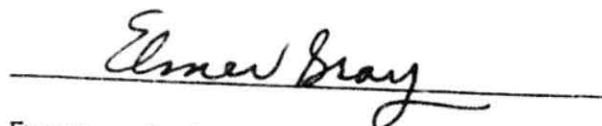


Director of Specialist Project



Approved August 13, 1990

(Date)



Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to acknowledge the faculty of Ohio County High School and the Central Office Staff for their assistance in the preparation of this project.

Thanks are extended to the writer's Specialist Project Committee at Western Kentucky University: Dr. Michael Richardson, chairperson; Dr. Gary Galluzo; and Dr. Dwight Cline. Their scholarly assistance and encouragement are appreciated.

In addition, the writer wishes to thank his wife, Jeanie R. Hunter for the love and patience shown over the past years. A special thanks to the author's parents, Lawrence C. and Jean G. Hunter; and his sister, Susan H. Ganote, for their support and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	v
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	8
III. MAJOR FINDINGS	30
IV. SUMMARY	34
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

APPENDIXES

A. Tips for Working With Single Parents	42
B. Volunteers	44
C. Getting Seniors Involved	46
D. Interview: Superintendent Canty	48
E. Interview: Linda Likins	50

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my two sons, Seth Baxter Hunter and Judson Ranney Hunter. Their future is my reason for preparing for the present.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my two sons, Seth Baxter Hunter and Judson Ranney Hunter. Their future is my reason for preparing for the present.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Lawrence C. Hunter, II April 1990 53 pages

Directed by: Dr. Michael Richardson, Dr. Gary Galluzo,
and Dr. Dwight Cline

Department of Western Kentucky University
Educational Leadership

Literature was reviewed to determine the importance of a public relations program in the public school system. Information was retrieved from various published sources, including materials from the National School Public Relations Association, professional journals, books relating to public relations and a variety of other educational reports.

An analysis of the literature reveals the following components of a successful public relations program:

1. A plan of action benefits the public relations program.
2. Staff participants benefit the public relations program.
3. Parent involvement is an important aspect of the public relations program.
4. Community involvement is essential to a successful public relations program.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Public relations is an important factor in public education. It is a factor as old as the one-room school. Concerns about public perception of the school system were as important then as they are now to those involved with education.

In today's society education is viewed differently by various people. Views and opinions, regarding education, vary among ethnic, geographic and socio-economic groups. Also, educational views may vary between parents of school-aged children and adults without children. All groups are important to a public relations program, but special attention should be directed to the adults without school-aged children. Statistics indicate that two-thirds to three-fourths of the adult population no longer have children in schools. (The National School Public Relations Association, 1971). By managing public views and developing plans through a public relations program, the public, the schools, and especially the students are best served.

One of the most important tasks education faces is building and maintaining public confidence. Confidence may be built by informing the public with factual information phrased so that it can be easily

understood. The National School Public Relations Association states that "public relations is simply the practice of social responsibility, a matter of first serving the best interests of the public by doing a good job and then making sure people know about it" (West, 1985).

Another important task of the public relations program is the building of good will. Open communications are essential to developing good will. The public relations program is designed to maintain the communication process between the educational system and the public. The result is not only good will, but also a gain in morale, understanding, and support. These claim to have long term success in changing public attitudes. Good will may enhance the program by placing emphasis on things of which the schools are most proud.

Once good will and public confidence are established, it is important for the school system to act as the conscience, reflecting on the fact that the schools actually belong to the public. The system wins support of the public by demanding responsible behavior that results in public support. The only thing that counts is public behavior that fosters sound educational principles and benefits the school (Jackson, 1986).

This brings to attention the task of public relations regarding financing, a subject generally misunderstood by the public. Public relations educates the public about adequate finances of schools now and in the future. The problem however of securing adequate support of schools goes beyond the understanding of need alone. People must have confidence in the fiscal management of the school (Kindred, 1960). The reporting of financing is another of the major concerns of an effective public relations program.

All the tasks that form the program culminate in a process. The process requires mindpower, manpower, materials, and money. No matter how much communication takes place, these requirements are essential for a successful system's public relations program.

Properly managed, public relations is an essential tool in building an effective school system. With an effective plan and purpose, it is a program that involves students, parents, community and staff. If appropriately motivated, organized, and activated, participation assures that purpose will be fulfilled.

Statement of the Problem

School systems frequently neglect their public image. The author hopes to present information and to identify the need for a public relations program in today's educational system.

The purpose of this paper is to determine the value of a public relations program in the public school system. More specifically, this paper will answer the following questions:

1. How will a plan of action benefit the public relations program?
2. To what extent does cost interfere with the public relations program?
3. To what extent can media relations improve the school's public relations program?
4. How is marketing important to the public relations program?
5. To what extent can staff participants enhance the public relations program?
6. What efforts can be made to involve the community in the school's public relations program?
7. To what extent is parental involvement important to the public relations program?
8. How is a public relations specialist beneficial to the public relations program?

This paper will answer the above stated questions by reporting recommendations from various authors and professional groups.

Methods of Research

For the purpose of this paper the author used one method of research. The method involved gathering information from various published sources. These sources included materials from the National School Public Relations Association, professional journals, books relating to public relations, and a variety of other educational reports. The bibliography is a complete list of the sources.

Limitations

The paper is limited in that recent publications were difficult to locate. Sources date from the nineteen hundred and seventies and the sixties; however, the few older sources used introduced information current to the purpose of this paper.

Definition of Terms

Community - the general public including parents of now school-aged children, business, Industry.

Education Public Relations Specialist - one who serves on the superintendent's administrative team. The individual oversees the system's public relations program.

Marketing - "the gathering of factual information as to consumer preferences for goods and services." (The National School Public Relations Association.)

Media - those dealing with radio, television, newspapers, community magazines.

Public relations - the responsibility of the school to communicate. It is defined by the National School Public Relations Association as "a planned and systematic two way process of communications between education organizations and its public designed to build morale, good will, understanding and support for that organization."

Staff - everyone in the immediate school

family: cooks, custodians, teachers,
principals, counselors.

Overview of the Study

This paper contains four sections. The first section is the introduction. The second presents a review of related literature. Findings from the literature are reported in the third section, as well as the conclusion.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Information on the topic Public Relations in Education was readily available. Most recent sources are Journals and published articles.

Plan

"Regarding public relations a written and adopted policy results in a plan. Effectively developed, implemented and assessed, this plan becomes synonymous with purpose. The success of a plan depends on many factors; the integrity and rationality that it reflects; the amount of time and money spent on making it work; the technology and facilities to accomodate it; the strategies to ensure its smooth operation; and the efforts of participants, individuals and groups, whose needs, interests and aspirations it embodies and serves" (West, 1985).

Communication experts suggest that public interest in education and support for it can be increased best by more skillful means of identifying the views of the people. They recommend increased effort to focus public attention on the more easily understood and generally accepted values of education because

scientists believe that is the best way to arouse widespread interest (Closkey, 1967).

A public relations plan is a direct approach in determining the public's interest. "The wise school district plans a structural communications program to counteract the vagaries of the community's day-to-day contact with its public schools" (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986).

When developing the plan the audience must be identified as well as needs (Armistead, 1989). Once needs are identified, put them on paper so that the needs may be shared with others. "In addition to a list, write a brief description of each item using the following outline:

- . What is the project?
- . Why is it needed?
- . What is the time frame?
- . What resources are necessary?
- . How will the project be assessed? "

(Ascough, 1986)

Once needs are determined they are to be transposed to objectives. "A detailed plan of action is necessary for achieving objectives. The plan starts by finding out what people think and feel about their schools. Pertinent information may be gathered in several ways, namely through the observations of school

officials; the recording of comments made by pupils, parents, clergyman, business leaders, friends and neighbors; clippings from local newspapers; general conferences with parents; individual interviews with a panel of representative citizens and opinion polling (Kindred, 1960).

When drafting the plan, the next step is to locate broad lines of action. Once these lines are determined, attention is directed to the question of appeals used in telling the public relations story, a story that "attracts attention and touches the thoughts and feelings of people" (Kindred, 1960).

For a plan to be successful it should have four characteristics. First a public relations program must contain two way communications. "A good public relation's program includes listening as much as talking." The plan also is to consider employees, students and teachers as important as editors and legislators. Too, the plan must be systematic and identify each segment of the public. The last characteristic considers public relations as a year-round program (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986).

Other plans of action exist. One is to determine goals, research the topic, modify the goal if necessary, outline the strategy and establish

organization (Bernays, 1986). Another communications plan "establishes the mission and goals, communicates the mission and goals, and develops a theme to reflect the mission and goals". (Lieberty, 1987)

"When implementing, revising or updating a school's public relations plan, it's a good idea to determine just what the community thinks." Surveys can be used to gather information and are relatively inexpensive (Armistead, 1989).

The most commonly used survey methods include the personal or face to face interview, the telephone interview, and the direct mail questionnaire.

"Provided adequate time, money, and supervision are available, the personal interview is the superior of the three methods" (West, 1985).

The direct mail questionnaire is considered the least effective method of survey. "Mail out questionnaires traditionally produce a poor return rate." Also, the silent majority is missed in the mail out survey. The opinions of these people could provide a more descriptive opinion and representation of attitudes (West, 1985).

"The telephone survey is frequently viewed as the middle of the road survey, but its ease of administering and high response rate make it by far the most attractive." However, telephone surveys must

consider that every person does not have a telephone, that many people have unlisted numbers, and that the directories do not include new listings (West, 1985).

Regardless of the planning approach the National School Public Relations Association identifies four secrets that result in a successful public relations plan: 1. Do a good job. 2. Do a good job. 3. Do a good job. 4. Tell people about it."

Staff

Wherry states, "the only way to effectively influence the attitude of the community about our schools is to enlist the assistance of every single person on the staff. Community contact with the entire staff, not just the 'professionals', is the most important way to present the school to the public."

The success of an education public relations program depends on the school family (West, 1985). "Well informed employees who are proud of their jobs build public confidence because good public relations for the schools comes first and foremost from the day-to-day, face-to-face contact by all school system employees with the community" (The National School Public Relations Association, 1986).

"Building pride on the job can best be accomplished by a genuine and continuing effort by the school

administrator to include all employees as part of the team" (The National School Public Relations Association, 1986). Principals face the responsibility of developing a public relations effort within their schools. The principals must be alert to opportunities and how to utilize them to the advantage of the school (Ascough). As a result "the wise school administrators know that they've got to manage their communication before their communications manage them" (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986).

Perhaps the most influential resources of the staff are the teachers. "Teachers compose the largest part of a school system's public communications resources." Teachers contribute substantial efforts to enhance the school and to help parents and students understand the values of their teaching services (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986).

In 1986 Wherry introduced ideas for school family meetings.

- . "Gather all staff members assigned to the building for the opening of school.
 - . Schedule total staff social events.
- Possibilities include:
- optional breakfasts hosted by the principal

- staff wide school family picnics at a local park
- school staff olympics with events for everyone - from checkers to a fun run, volleyball, softball, horse-shoes and frisbee
- . Schedule a staff health fair as an inservice day. Blood pressure screening can usually be arranged in co-operation with local health officials. Also include groups providing information about exercise, diabetes screening, diet support groups and more" (Wherry, 1986).

An important aspect of the public relations program is internal staff communications. Some positive internal approaches include:

- . Staff Appreciation Week or Staff Person for a Day. Notes of appreciation may be hand delivered or mailed to the special person. Another "pat on the back" would be to post a banner reading "It's Your Day John Smith".
- . Substitute welcome packets. The packets tend to make the substitute feel welcome. Contents may include pen and pencil, hall passes, nametag and a coffeecup.

- . Business cards. These cards are becoming popular for staff people.
- . Staff appreciation luncheon. Not only does the staff receive a free lunch but also recognition. The event may include guests from the central office and VIP's from the community. (Wherry)

Different approaches can be used to reach the external community. Wherry suggests the following:

- . Swap Day. The idea is for students to swap places with a parent (SWAP) for a day. Parents attend classes and students stay home.
- . Student Showcase. Student artwork is placed on display throughout the community.
- . Parent Conferences. Conferences are planned after school on a regular schedule.
- . People Library. The idea is to identify people in the community who can be used as personal learning sources for students.
- . Staff members as speakers. School staff members are offered as speakers for local service clubs.
- . "Senior Proms." Some high schools host a "senior prom" for senior citizens, complete with dance music from their era."

An additional external approach listed by Moak and Nickerson in 1988 includes:

- . Performing arts. Performing groups offer the cast for entertainment of community clubs. The visiting group prepares a program and allows the advisor to show off his/her students.

Kindred adds still another external approach:

- . Audio-Visual Production. "Good productions bring numerous invitations from community groups. Not only do they regard these productions as fine entertainment but also a means to learn something more of the schools for which their taxes pay" (Kindred, 1960).

Parent Involvement

"Statistics support the adage that when parents are involved in the educational process, students do better in school" (Johnson, 1986). School Public Relations: The Complete Book states "whenever a successful education program is found a strong program of parent involvement exists." Studies by West found, "whenever parental support is actual, parents assume their roles as second line contributors to an education public relations program and function as full-fledged

members of the extended school family. The more extensive their involvement, the greater their identity with the school, provided the results of their efforts can be perceived by them as an actual contribution to the school system." Parent involvement benefits students in the following ways:

1. Academic achievement rises.
2. Student behavior improves.
3. Student motivation increases.
4. Attendance becomes more regular.
5. Student dropout rates are lower.
6. Students have a more positive attitude toward homework.
7. Parents and community support increase (Hester, 1989).

The parent-teacher organization or parent-teacher association is an effective way to involve parents. In 1986, Wilson and Rossman found "strong parent organizations are the norm in exemplary schools."

Possible techniques to establish parent involvement are listed in Hester:

- . Use multiple means to contact parents: handbooks, newsletters, notes home, telephone calls and parent-teacher conferences. -
- . Establish an open friendly climate.

- . Have all teachers send home an outline of their class objectives, homework, expectations, how they can be contacted, and how parents can help.
- . Set aside a specific time each week for the principal to meet with the parents without appointment.
- . Initiate a program of frequent questionnaires to parents to give them an opportunity to evaluate their child's program and provide feedback to the school staff members.
- . Conduct special evening meetings for parents of students "at risk" academically.
- . Encourage parents to serve on school committees to assist in developing policies to address school problems such as drug abuse and smoking on campus.
- . Promote the involvement of parent advocates or school site councils, PTA organizations, and related school-community councils.

School Public Relations: The Complete Book lists the following programs to develop parent involvement:

Working with Single Parents--see appendix A

Child Abuse Prevention

Latch Key Programs

Joint Custody

Tips for Parent/Teacher Conferences

Books for Tots

Student Tutor Corps

Pride Week Campaign

Community Relations

"The goal of school-community relations is to find ways to offer support to the schools that help students learn and have as few distractions as possible" (Mookard Nickerson, 1988).

Beneficial resources are available in all communities. Some resources include institutions and organizations. "Every institution and organization in your town and/or school district has its own communication channels, public relation activities and other possible resources" (Ascough, 1986).

Within these institutions and organizations, proprietors and executives can bring valuable specialized knowledge into the school. They can serve as volunteers, assume leadership roles on advisory committees; spearhead fundraising campaigns; teach a community education program; and create a communications network that channels information rapidly from school to business and industry and back again" (West, 1985). Also, the agencies, institutions

and organizations can make further contributions. Social, recreational, legal, and educational agencies exist within a community. These are ready and willing to serve a school. Universities or community colleges offer ways to introduce and develop common education goals (West, 1985).

"School boards and administrators may think they know how their community feels, but rarely do they know" School Public Relations: The Complete Book. Therefore it is important to include special interest group leaders where new programs or activities are planned (Kudlacek, 1989). This brings to question the selection of community members? "One theory of communication holds that every community has opinion leaders whose status makes their opinions more valuable than the average person's. Many public relations aim at these people" (Cooper, 1986). Kudlacek suggests some of the veteran staff members list ten people whom others go to for information; furthermore, the list is to include names of people who (in the past) have been critical as well as those who have been supportive.

Media Relations

The public relations program relates closely to the media. "Perhaps the most vital means of communicating with the public is the press. As a

result, most educators must wear two hats, one as an educator and the other as a newspaper reporter" (Kindred).

Positive media relations can be enhanced by finding out what specific forms of media cover the district area. Develop a list of names of reporters and editors, their addresses and phone numbers. These people should be informed of the public relations program and asked for assistance. Also, "ask media contacts what the school's public relations program can do for them and then always be prompt with responses to their calls" (Siegel, 1989). Get to know the media people personally and get them to know those sharing school news. Most important is to always tell the truth (Ordovensky, 1986). Pleasant working conditions with the media affect the coverage of schools, students, staff members, and programs (Siegel, 1989). The public relations program can improve "relations with the media almost overnight and maintain that relationship indefinitely" (Ordovensky, 1986). Siegel lists the following basic rules of thumb when dealing with the media.

1. "Return calls. When a reporter calls you, return the call as soon as you can. If you don't know the answer to the question tell them. Don't bluff your

way through a situation; you will undoubtedly regret it later.

2. Don't go off the record. Your safest bet is to say only things you are comfortable with the media using.
3. Don't tell reporters how to write their stories.
4. Avoid jargon.
5. Provide adequate documentation.
6. Never cover up. Always be honest.
Reporters are dedicated to sniffing out the truth and you'll generate far more good will, and positive news coverage by honestly presenting the situation, even if it means an occasional negative story.
7. Correct facts. If the facts of a printed story are incorrect, call the reporter and tell him or her so.
8. Don't ask to review articles before they are printed.
9. Compliments are accepted. compliment the reporter on his or her writing with a copy to his or her boss.
10. Know what is legally public information."

The public relations program informs the media through news releases, news advisories, and public service announcements. People now say the source of information that is their chief judge of school quality is the newspaper (Gallup and Elam, 1988). Keeping this in mind, the public relations program follows guidelines regarding news releases.

"News releases should contain a contact name and phone number and a catchy headline. Reporters don't want already written feature stories. They want the basics: who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how." Sentences should use action verbs and be kept short. All spelling, statistics and dates are to be verified. Information should be presented in journalistic style with the important information at the beginning. Know the deadlines of the reporter and telephone as a followup (Slegel, 1989).

Tip sheets are news advisories that are presented to the media. The tip sheet is a "short description of a coming event or issue that might interest the media" (Slegel, 1989).

Public Service Announcements or P. S. A.'s disperse short, factual bits about the events and policies of a school. The station is to be informed of the date it may begin using the P. S. A. and the date to remove it from the air (Slegel, 1989).

Perhaps the most difficult area of media relations is crisis management. Therefore it is essential to develop a crisis management plan. Siegel suggests the plan determine the following things:

- . Who will be a designated spokesperson?
- . Where can you set up a headquarters if you need to?
- . How will information get to the designated spokesperson?
- . Will the district adopt an open and helpful positive relationship with the media?
- . Who will make up the crisis communication team?

Marketing

"Marketing which refers to the process of selling can well be applied to the educational world." The products are the academic programs, services, and facilities that make up the students' education. Students, parents, taxpayers, and the business community are the consumers. The producers are the school board members, administrators, teachers, and other employees (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986).

"Good schools sell themselves; marketing them is actively campaigning to persuade the public of their value is somehow manipulative" (Jackson, 1986). The key to the public relations program is marketing. "You've got to have substance in the form of positive achievement, but selling the staff to sell the schools transforms that achievement into employee pride and public confidence. The end result is that what is good gets better" (Lashley, 1989).

"Marketing will revitalize the public's interest in its schools, making them more appealing not only to their immediate client (parents, students and the vast number of adults enrolled in community education programs) but to the general community." One result of marketing is an increase in staff and student morale. More important however, is the involvement of community members brought about through marketing (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986).

The following steps implement marketing in the public relations:

"Selling the first of these dimensions was once a taboo in educational public relations but now is coming to the front in marketing. Selling may be construed as marketing in which the client's needs and interests are

researched and planned in order to gain his or her approval and support.

Persuading - It is skillfully organizing a message to get a much needed point across. It is the reliance on experts to achieve credibility and trust.

Informing - Information is systematically and comprehensively planned and organized and is disseminated continuously and promptly. It is also directed at appropriate audiences.

Defining- Defining means structuring messages for different audiences and eliminating the educational jargon that staves off understanding.

Exchanging - Exchanging is the recognition of the importance of feedback. It implies a free flow of information that will facilitate action.

Responding - Information is shared for the mutual benefit of both parties, divergent points of view are seen as necessary and important and aims are attended and consolidated to achieve realistic and desirable progress. An education public relations program that embraces this level of responsiveness should fully enjoy the

benefits and support that participation portends.

Synergizing - Synergizing is the optional representation and interaction of the seven dimensions of communication within an education public relations program" (West, 1985).

Cost

In planning the public relations program, the subject of cost must be considered. "The argument sometimes offered that a school district just can't afford a public relations program falls apart pretty quickly when you consider how much staff time is already being spent on public relations activities" (School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986). Frequently, board members and administrators demand increased productivity by assigning school staff members additional work. However, "the cost of a new public relations campaign often becomes evident when you consider the work these staff members can no longer perform" (Cooper, 1986).

Cost-effectiveness is a factor of concern. "Every public relations effort should compare

effectiveness against cost. How much does your message cost per contact?" (Cooper, 1986)

"Costs include a calculation of the number of employee hours spent on the project, at an average per hour increment of the salaries of all the people involved, plus any materials purchased for the program" (Cooper, 1986).

Public Relations Specialist

The management of the public relations program may be delegated among several people. However, many districts see fit to employ a public relations specialist. "Educational public relations specialists are becoming strongly identified with the school management function, and this trend is likely to grow." These people serve under the superintendent or administrative council (West, 1985).

The intensity of the program reflects the interest shown by the specialist. The public relations person personifies the image of the school. However, "the public relations person sometimes is susceptible to pressure not only from his boss, the superintendent, but also from the boss's bosses (the school board). Still this person must exemplify and epitomize behavior that

makes the organizational plan a success" (West, 1985).

Chapter III

MAJOR FINDINGS

The purpose of this section is to recapitulate the major findings and to present conclusions developed from these findings.

Summary

Questions were posed in the introduction of this paper. The major findings concerning each question are summarized as follows:

1. A plan of action benefits the public relations program. The plan of action determines the public's interest and objectives to meet these interests. All school employees, students, and teachers are considered in the plan. When implimenting the plan, surveys may be used to gather information. Survey methods include the personal or face to face interview, the telephone interview, and the direct mail questionnaire. To benefit the public relations program, a good job by the school is essential. Then that good job must be publicized, telling the benefits.
2. Staff participants enhance the public relations program. The most effective way to influence the community attitude is to include every staff person in the public relations program. This develops employee pride. Employees who are proud of their

Jobs build pride in their job. Principals, who develop the program within their schools, must know how to influence all resources to improve the public relations program. Teachers are one of the most influential resources of the staff.

Many gestures and actions can be offered to improve internal staff participation. These range from Staff Appreciation Week to printed business cards. Also, external gestures and actions can be utilized to reach the public. These may be in the form of a Student Showcase, staff members as public speakers, audio visual productions, and others.

3. Parent involvement is an important aspect of the public relations program. Studies have shown that when parents are involved, students do better. Involvement may be in the form of a parent organization, parent volunteer, or a reinforcement of school activities. The public relations program approaches parents through parent teacher conferences, questionnaires, and special needs programs.
4. Various methods may be incorporated into the public relations program to involve the community. One method is to involve specialists who work in business public relations. These people may serve on advisory committees and share valuable

specialized knowledge. Community leaders may also initiate fund raisers for the school system or teach community education programs.

5. A positive media relationship improves the schools' public relations program. A positive relationship develops through use of various techniques. One of these is getting to know the media people. A pleasant relationship affects the coverage of the schools, staff members, and programs. Perhaps the most important technique is to be truthful, avoid cover ups.
6. Marketing is important to the public relations program. The public relations program markets academic, service, and facility programs. Marketing is selling the schools to persuade the community of their value. Also, marketing benefits the program through an increase in the morale of staff and students. Still, more importantly, marketing involves the community members in the public relations program.
7. The issue of cost may interfere with the public relations program. School districts frequently argue that a public relations program will not fit into the budget. The argument is the number of hours classroom teachers and supervisory staff use to promote public relations. Those questioning

cost need merely to weigh the benefits or effectiveness against cost.

8. The public relations specialist is beneficial to the public relations program. The management of the program may be delegated to several people; however, critics argue this is not the most productive method. The public relations specialist works under the supervision of the superintendent.

Chapter IV

SUMMARY

The research reported identifies many avenues that result in an effective public relations program. All avenues or choices must begin with a plan - something that may be overlooked by many districts, but a necessity for a successful program.

Basically, the planning format determines the goal, studies the public, if necessary alters the goal, plots a strategy, and implements the program. This process is one requiring mindpower, manpower, materials, and money. The planning format includes staff, parent, and community involvement.

A public relations plan may change from district to district. Opinions and needs vary from one geographic region to another. Non-parent groups are an element that may dictate the need for change. The ratio of parents with children in school to non-parents in the community must be addressed. Some communities will need to conduct the public relations program to entice this group to become committed either through involvement or through support for those programs.

-

The research presented stresses the importance of public confidence. A valuable public relations program recognizes the signification of good will and strives to serve the best interest of the public. To thrive, this social responsibility must be based upon open communications between the educational system and the public. Once established, the good will and public confidence lead to support for the schools and the education system.

The recommendations for use of the presented materials are numerous. There are many issues the public relations program needs to address. The public, the schools and especially the students are served mainly by establishing a sound public relations program. The successful public relations program establishes needs assessment surveys, develops staff involvement and pride, instills parent involvement and community interest and stays abreast of media concerns. All are to be addressed on a daily basis and implemented for success.

Each segment of the program must incorporate marketing to project the image of effectiveness. Interest brought about through marketing makes the schools more appealing to the public.

Recommendations based on the information gathered are many. Schools should address strong and weak

areas, take measures to recognize the successful, and improve the areas of concern. The faculty and staff need to develop a feeling of belonging and of importance. Social activities to improve morale may include aerobics, a sundae party, sports events, and others.

Similar activities may be implemented involving parents. Any activity or ploy to include parents results in a more overall productive student. Students feel a part of the school.

Involve the community by inviting business leaders to the schools. Encourage them to become members of concern groups or simply ask them to evaluate the school periodically.

A public relations committee could be formed. The committee may include staff members, faculty members, parents, and a community representative. This group would be accountable for developing and implementing the public relations program.

A public relations specialist is also recommended. This individual serves under the direction of the superintendent. He or she is one who accepts the responsibility for the program, stays abreast of current issues and changes, and informs the public. He

or she must be one who has an overall knowledge of the school system and possesses sound integrity.

Based on the materials available, the possibilities of future study are limitless. Our changing society must address the number of single parents, children as parents, latch key children, and the homeless. Also, each future generation will view a growing population of the elderly.

The literature suggests societal issues reflect changes in implementing educational programs designed to meet the educational needs of children, the older learner, the homeless and single parents. While educators are becoming aware of these developing programs, it will be of paramount importance for the public relations program to work to ensure public endorsement.

Chapter V
BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Armstead, L. (1980). A four-step process for school public relations. NASSP Bulletin, 73, 6-13.
- Ascough, L. (1986). Managing the school p.r. effort: not an impossible task. NASSP Bulletin, 70, 14-18.
- Bernays, E. (1986). The engineering of consent: an organized approach to p.r. efforts. NASSP Bulletin, 70, 52-54.
- Closkey, G. (1967). Education and public understanding. New York: Harper and Row.
- Cooper, L. (1986). Take the guesswork out of school public relations. Education Digest, LII, 13-15.
- Gallup, A. and Elam S. (1988). The twentieth annual gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 42-44.
- Hester, H. (1989). Start at home to improve home-school relations. NASSP Bulletin, 73, 23-27.
- Jackson, P. (1986). How to build public relationships that motivate real support. NASSP Bulletin, 70, 25-31.

- Johnson, C. (1986). The positive parent approach to school. NASSP Bulletin, 70, 19-24.
- Kindred, L. (1960). How to tell the school story. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Kowalski, T. (1987). The second coming of community education. The Education Digest, LII, 8-11.
- Kudlacek, B. (1989). Special interest groups. NASSP Bulletin, 73, 29-32.
- Lashley, J. (1989) Attitude and communication build public relations. NASSP Bulletin, 73, 34-35.
- Liebertz, S. (1987). Developing a community relation plan.
- Mann, D. (1986). High school principals and school-business coalitions. The Education Digest, LII, 21-23.
- McQuaid, P. (1989). The rising tide of mediocre education coverage. The Education Digest, LIV, 7-10.
- Moak, A. and Nicerson, N. (1988). School and community relations: another aspect of instructional leadership. NASSP Bulletin, 72, 44-46.
- The National School Public Relations Association. (1971). Ideas for improving public confidence in public education. Washington D.C.: The National School Public Relations Association.

Ordovensky, P. (1986). Dealing with the media: honesty is the best policy. NASSP Bulletin, 70,

35-37.

School public relations: the complete book. (1986).

(place of publication unknown).

Siegel, D. (1939). No news isn't good news: effective media relations. NASSP Bulletin, 79, 1-4.

West, P. (1985). Educational public relations.

Beverly Hills, Ca.: Sage Publications.

Wherry, J. (1986). A public relations secret: enlist

entire staff for p.r. effectiveness. NASSP

Bulletin, 70, 3-13.

Wilson, B. and Rossman G. (1986). Collaborative links

with the community: lessons from exemplary

secondary schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 67,

763-764.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Tips for Working with Single Parents

- * Hold a staff in-service training session on working with single parents. Many staff members are themselves single parents, and can share some of their concerns and problems.
- * Establish single-parent groups so that they can discuss concerns. Remember to schedule these sessions at various times so that both working parents and those staying at home can participate. It is best to consider different times of the day. Provide baby-sitting services for parents who need this help.
- * Remind parent groups that prizes are not given for children who bring both parents to a meeting.
- * Be extremely sensitive to teachers and administrators who might use the term "broken home," "fractured family" and "diminished family" to produce a stereotyped attitude about the special children involved.

- * Schedule parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other possible activities in the morning before parents need to be on the job, or in the evening, after work, or on the weekend. This is important for single parents and for two-career parents. Many parents want to volunteer and share in the school activities, but their work schedule doesn't enable them to attend activities, during certain hours. Don't penalize the mother who is simply not available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. as "unwilling to help." Plan for ways that mother/father can contribute later.
- * Develop special programs for latch key children. Arrange to have the school open early and close late. Seek volunteers from the community and parents. Latchkey programs providing extended day care for children are increasing. Financial support can come from local business, churches, chambers of commerce, etc.
- * Provide space on school forms for names and addresses of both parents, and for names of blended family members if the parents re-marry. Provide duplicate sets of school materials if requested.

School Public Relations: - The Complete Book, 1986.

APPENDIX B

Volunteers

According to school district reports, the widespread use of volunteers can have these beneficial results (among others):

- * Volunteers save money for the schools and give students more individual attention.
- * They free teachers and staff from some of the necessary paperwork.
- * Volunteers in the classroom usually result in fewer discipline problems because there is adult supervision.
- * Volunteers become a link between the school and the community.

Experience, however, has taught many districts that certain cautions must be observed and certain guidelines must be followed.

- * Staff members often need to be "sold" on the contribution that volunteers can make.
- * The program requires an effective training program for the volunteers.
- * The volunteer program must be coordinated and supervised by someone.

- * Someone in each school must be responsible for welcoming and supervising volunteers.
- * Volunteers should be given work that is challenging and interesting - their jobs shouldn't be dull and tedious.

School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986

Appendix C

Getting Seniors Involved

There are many things senior citizens can do for the schools. And there are many things schools can do for senior citizens. For instance, schools can:

- * Seek out and speak with senior citizen groups, urging their members to become school volunteers.
- * Provide senior citizens with space for an activities center in a school in which enrollment has declined.
- * Provide a special day to recognize and honor senior citizens.
- * Have a courtesy pass - a "Golden Age Card" as some school districts call it - for free admissions to school-sponsored events, such as athletic contests, plays and continuing education classes.
- * Provide breakfasts or lunches in school buildings.
- * Arrange for use of school buses during non-school hours to take senior citizens to activities of interest to them.

- * Appoint a school district staff member to act as liaison with senior citizen groups to keep open lines of communication.
- * Invite senior citizens to use school libraries, gyms, swimming pools and other facilities.

School Public Relations: The Complete Book, 1986

APPENDIX D

Interview

Grover Canty, Superintendent

Ohio County Schools

Mr. Canty was asked what Ohio County has done to improve public relations. He listed the following:

A showcase page in the local county paper recognizes academic accomplishments of students.

The superintendent prepares a newspaper article. The purpose of the article is to present factual information regarding educational issues.

The school board is preparing a program to recognize teachers who have taught "x" number of years.

During each board meeting principals submit positive information from their schools.

Students who excel academically or athletically receive recognition from the board.

A newsletter is prepared and sent to principals and board members. Plans include sending a similar newsletter three times a year to parents.

A logo for the school system has been designed by the gifted classes and art classes.

The Central Office desires to improve relations with the Parent-Teacher Organizations and the Ohio County Education Association.

During National Teacher's Week the school board sent vegetable trays to each school.

When asked how the public relations program could be improved, Canty stated, "We are the way we are perceived."

Ideally the system needs a staff member in charge of public relations.

APPENDIX E

Interview

Linda Likins, Chairman

Ohio County Board of Education

Ms. Likins was asked how she felt public relations had improved during her tenure on the Ohio County School Board. She listed the following improvements:

The school board is more open and makes an effort to share information with the public and school personnel.

The school board prepares an agenda for the monthly meetings. This form of organization makes the public more comfortable with the format.

A citizen advisory group has been formed to meet bi-monthly and discuss board activities.

The school board has appointed committees to investigate controversial issues.

The school board has developed a district wide logo to be incorporated into an employee appreciation program.

The school board provides material for a page in the county newspaper.

When asked what areas she would like to see improved, Likins mentioned the following:

More people need to attend monthly board meetings.

More opportunity for the board members to meet with the community to exchange ideas.

Develop an employee recognition program to improve moral.

Utilize a building representative to prioritize needs.

To enhance and strengthen things already initiated.

V I T A

Lawrence Crittenden Hunter, II was born [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] His parents are Lawrence C. and Jean G. Hunter of Hartford, Kentucky. Hunter resided in Hartford from birth to high school graduation in 1971. Education in the Ohio County School System included Wayland Alexander Elementary, Hartford Junior High, and Ohio County High.

College life began at the University of Kentucky. As a senior, he transferred to Western Kentucky University. Graduation was in July, 1975, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree, with an area of concentration in art and certification to teach art K-12. The Master's Degree was earned in 1979, followed by a General Rank I in 1980. Classes were taken to include certification of Director of Pupil Personnel, Elementary Principal, Secondary Principal and Supervisor.

His teaching career began at Ohio County Middle School. After teaching art eleven years, he transferred to Ohio County High in 1986.

In 1973, L.C. "Critt" Hunter II and Jeanie Ranney Hunter married. After college graduation the Hunters settled in Hartford. A son, Seth Baxter, was born into

the family in 1981. Five years later a second son, Judson Ranney, was born.

Activities include membership in the Ohio County Education Association, Kentucky Education Association and the National Education Association. Positions in the local association include Building Representative, Treasurer, Vice-President, and Third District Representative.

Community activities include Ohio County Historical Society, Pure Kentucky Committee, Courthouse Players, and Hartford City Council.

Church activities at the Hartford United Methodist Church include Youth Director, Sunday School Teacher, Pastor-Parrish Committee, Nominating Committee, Council on Ministries and Trustee.